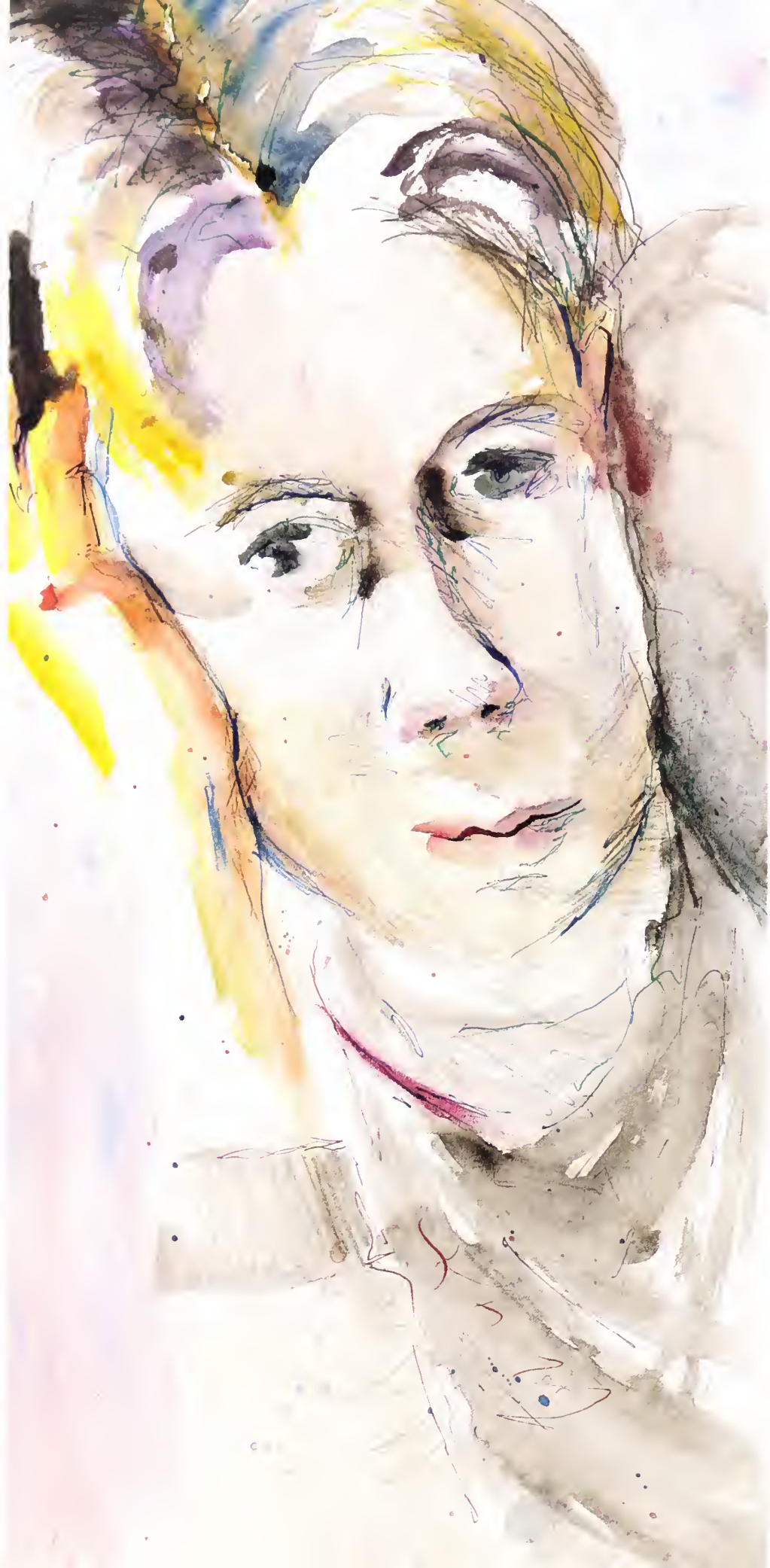




the register
★ **Spring 98**





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The Register is published twice a year by the students of Boston Latin School. Students in Classes I through VI are invited to submit original writing and artwork. Pieces are selected by the Editorial Board of *The Register* on the basis of quality, not name recognition; the writers of all pieces remain anonymous to the Editorial Board during the selection process to ensure that all classes are fairly represented and no one is given an unfair advantage.

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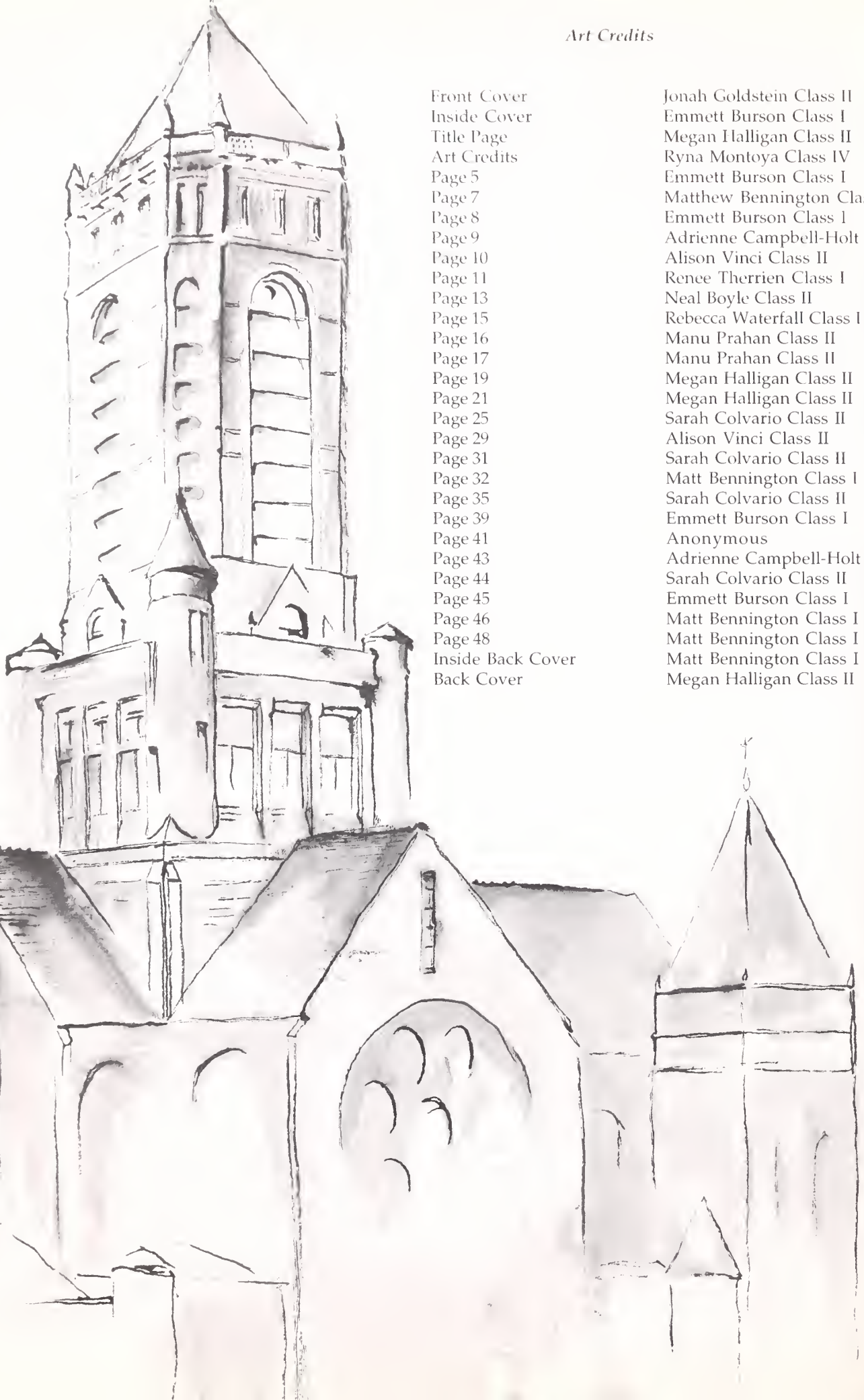
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Simultaneous

It was on one of those days when
spring is still in winter's womb
and you can almost smell it but you can't taste it quite yet
and the wind blows memories of childhood
and beginnings through your hair,
that the sun beckoned me outside,
as everything within was crashed and tumbled
by the timbre of its raspy, world-weary voice.

— Jane Gurfinkel, II

A Quaint Quibble

Ruffling through the clouds
On a day when your eyes
Consume your body and
Your senses become superficial,
Hearing the voice of the wind
Greeting the dying leaves
Comforting them to no avail
As they try to whistle by.
The sun introduces a new
Friend to its family
Smiling upon it,
Shadowing its
Overwhelming fear.
Nature nurturing its little children.

— Megan Halligan, II

Infusion

She lights the electric stove and breaks a small, circular, black coal into two pieces and places one piece on the stove and puts the other back into the wrinkled foil paper it came out of. Tiny sparks fly around the coal in a wild frenzy as the red flames envelop its surface and turn it into a pretty glowing ember. She gently takes an old, tired, silver fork to remove the hot but now quite little piece of charcoal and puts it in what her grandmother fondly refers to as "gul". It's a small clay chalice made centuries ago with the same purpose of holding the fragment of fire that now lies there. She opens the wooden door of the petite cabinet located in the far corner of the kitchen and reaches for the familiar small jug, disturbing with her hand the cool air within that envelops the many traditional clay pots and trinkets that have been bequeathed to her mother from relatives in Ethiopia. She removes the jar and closes the gateway to the tiny time capsule filled with the relics of her culture. She then lends her hand to the golden yellow fragments of miniature stones that fall out from the smooth, round mouth of the jug, accompanied by shiny, tanned dust. Her hand casually sprinkles the powder onto the hot coal and lifts away while the glittering specs of the incense melt effervescently. An emanation of smoke gradually rises from the chalice and heads in the direction of the living room, pushed by each breath that escapes her lips.

Older members of the family eagerly await the arrival of this final element before the

start of the coffee. No proper household that calls itself Ethiopian makes coffee without the addition of this important component. It is almost better not to offer coffee, if there is no incense in the house. It is one of those traditions that hang around no matter how far away a person moves or feels removed from the home country. To understand the effect produced by a pinch of gums and resins of a particularly unusual odor married to a mite of fire, one needs to look beyond the mist that now engulfs the various rooms of the house, to hear beyond the silence that's only disturbed by the soft clinking of the spoon and cup, to see through the eyes that no longer feel attached to anything but loll about freely within the haze, to feel the relaxed muscles of the hearts that beat in one carefree rhythmic pattern that links the people to their past.

Like many other cultures, incense in Ethiopia has been used in religious ceremonies for thousands and thousands of years and continues to be used to this day. However, its role is not limited to the churches, monasteries, and other religious areas but also the average Ethiopian home.

The modernist is connected, through this seemingly insignificant remnant piece of culture, to the fireplace in the middle of the circular hut with walls that are made of simple brown clay mixed in with some straw and covered with stucco; with conical roofs formed by the systematic piling and weaving together of hay;

with doors made out of wood cut from the nearby forest; and with the muddy floors that were rubbed by the small hands of children to make them into the dry, cracked but smooth ground they came to be. All this was done with bare hands. Aside from building a place to live, there was also the responsibility of providing food, which mainly rested with the men. Their counterparts would stay home and nurture their young and cook the food and clean their abodes. Therefore, the only time when they could gather and entertain themselves occurred when they made coffee; and who could deny the incorporation of something as soothing, indulging, and nearly as supernatural in its powers of ease as incense to the social hour?

Returning home, scorched by the brutal sun, with hardened feet and hands, and eyes glaring red from the assault of sand, the men repose enwrapped in their large home-made blankets by the blazing fireplace at the center. They sit there, as the smell of scented fog sips through their clothing, hair, and skin and swallows them into a deep and peaceful reverie. Reclining in their family cloister, they pass their time united—entranced by the same magical aura that continues to affect the generations that came after.

The living room slowly springs into action. People sketch and feel slight surges of energy encouraging them to awaken from their cultural submergence. The bluish smoke that had pervaded the room is no longer visible. It

has found various openings and cracks through which it can permeate to the outside world. The incense leaves behind only a slight trail of its sweet aroma as it emanates to combine with the wind that holds within it the essence of the past with that of the present.

— *Alfa Tiruneh, II*

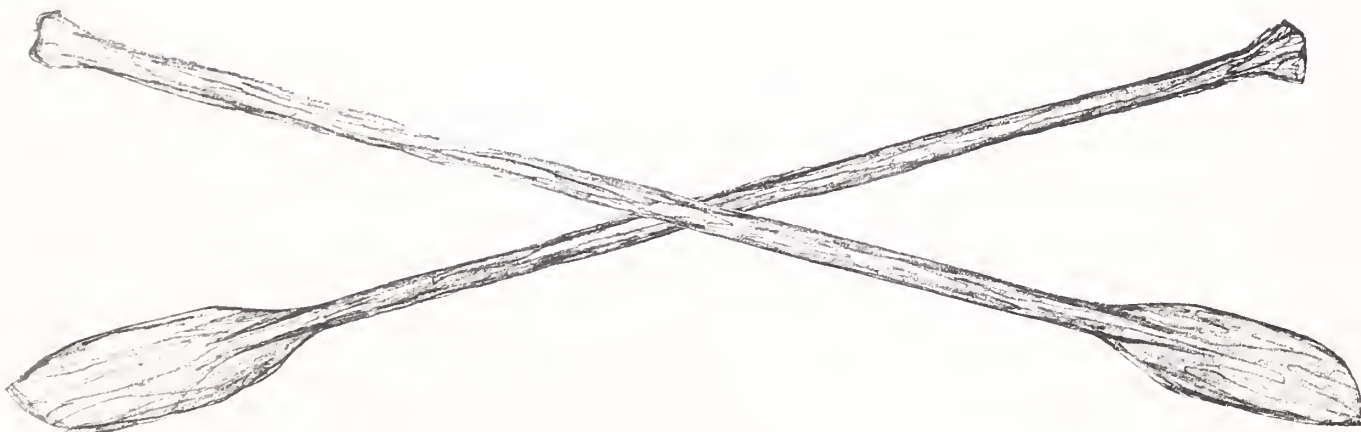


Ready-all, ROW

These words set in motion a crew
of rowers
who have waited tensely
with every muscle strained.
I love being in an eight-woman crew,
one part of a whole.
Everyone remains in sync
the oars cut into the water
together
as if controlled by
a single movement.
The backs of the eight rowers
straighten
and angle.
The oars pop out
from the glassy river,
glide a few inches,
then plunge in once more;
one continuous motion.
The boat seems to fly
above the water.
The only evidence of its passing
the tiny whirlpools,
from the oars
the thin "v" of water
left by the bow,
both of which quickly dissipate

leaving no trace.
I experience a spiritual feeling
when I am rowing;
a feeling of balance
and peacefulness.
The connection to
seven other persons
acting as one in a singular,
synchronized
movement is a connection
which I have not found elsewhere.
This is the ideal.
The peace of the moment
is often broken by
"catching a crab,"
an oar gets stuck in the water,
sometimes,
taking its owner with it.
There are other threats,
unseen sandbars,
vicious clumps of water lilies,
many boats which crowd the river.
But the moments of communion
nullify the mayhem with their perfection.

— Mairéad Maheigan, *I*



Somewhere and Nowhere

As I was walking to school one day,
I saw my neighbors' daughters arguing. One slapped the other and
I walked away.

As I was walking to school one day,
I walked past my old classmate and his girlfriend. I muttered a faint "hello" and grinned and she gave
me a nasty look. She grabbed his arm and sped past me.

I continued walking.

As I was walking to school one day,
and, a broken doll, lying face up with one eyelid closed and the
other half open. A chunk of her golden hair had fallen a few feet from where she was lying and was
now soiled by a green piece of gum and accompanied by slobber.
Mutilated, left to fend for herself in the fighting ground.

I continued on.

As I was walking to school one day,
I walked past an empty needle, a broken beer bottle. Scattered glass waiting to cut my sole.
I tiptoed past the mess and stepped in a pile of soggy newspaper.

A black bird flew overhead, squawking and mocking me.

I kept on walking

As I was walking to school one day,
I walked past a bum lying in a bunch of black plastic bags.
He looked at me and gave me an awkward grin through his missing teeth. "Help the homeless, honey,
help the homeless," he said, jangling the coins in his cup.
I drop some change into the cup and turned away.

I walked on.

As I was walking to school one day,
I wondered if I was going anywhere.

— *Alinna Chung, II*





One Man's Trilogy

I had noticed him in the corner, alone
Not wanting to be noticed, but I looked anyway.
I watched his dragging, rhythmic gait as he took a seat in the back,
Where the squeaky pews were.

He never missed a day, always on time,
Never coming during the entrance song like most of us did.

He always seemed so severe,
Too deep in thought to be disturbed.
His hands folded, pink with quivering lips mouthing hopes and prayers.
Eyes that want to see stay shut and closed off from the world.
The rigid creases on his brow shifted and folded over,
Like waves crashing against the ocean floor.
And he sat down, shaking and sweating,
In his cowboy boots and overcoat.

A man seeking peace in his Savior's house.
A smile surrounding his countenance,
Only when he took the Body.
No one ever knew his name,
Or where he was from.
But he showed up every Sunday,
Faithfully, and with eagerness.

Then one day when the heat was known to kill.
Women fanned themselves,
Between shouts of "Amen!" and "Alleluia!"
Children fidgeted in their seats, eager to get outside.
And when I looked towards the back,
There he was in his squeaky pew.

There was no overcoat,
No jeans or overalls,
But the familiar cowboy hat remained.
He wore a dark, tailored suit,
And he smiled, for the first time,
With yellow and unkempt teeth,
But I saw him smile.

When the final blessing was given,
He took off his cowboy hat in respect.
His bare head was dented,
And sketched with jagged scars and stitch marks,
Amidst fine clumps of hair.
But he promptly replaced his hat,
Leaving his squeaky pew,
And going outside into the beaming sun.
He seemed to glide into the rushing streets to meet
His Father, His Son, and His Holy Spirit.
Still smiling.

— Emmanuella Duplessy, I

Fireflies

Yellow spots before my eyes
Caused by captive fireflies,
Up above an angel cries
At the fate of such poor creatures.

In a jar before my face
Such a deadly, confined space,
They must long for a taste
Of precious, elusive freedom!

"Little boy," I softly say,
"God's creatures are not for play.
So please, let them fly away;
Let compassion fill your young heart!"

Thankfully, I see he hears,
Both our eyes are filled with tears,
How he freed those poor, small creatures!

Yellow spots before my eyes
Caused by joyous fireflies,
Up above an angel sighs
Glad that Mercy still lives on Earth.

— Renee M. Therrien, I

A poem about the woman and child painting

I've looked at my inscription: "To a Loving Mother and Wife,"
But I most remember sitting with my perfect golden-haired child,
Combing the curls long since smoothed out and made shiny
Savoring my small power over my daughter's happiness
And the short amount of time I had to sit quietly with her
Because I knew that there would be a time
When I would no longer be able
To smooth out the tangles in her life
And when I see her putting flowers by my grave,
I see her golden hair shining in the sun
And I know she doesn't need me.

— Emily Grigg-Saito, III



When I Was Nine

Snow falls as the gods sprinkle confetti from the clouds. It seems to me that everything good is accompanied by something bad, and so my mind is a mixture of thoughts while my heart aches with emotions. I don't know whether to be ecstatic or mournful; the situation does not simply call for one or the other. I am trapped in a shady middle but my naivete points me towards sunshine and happiness, and so I follow my child-like nature.

It is late February and my mother packs me into the van as we hurry towards the site of the Fates' playground. There the three sisters sew the thread of life, measure it and finally cut it. My mother is furiously running to catch and secure her mother's life who is playing with the third sister's friend, Death, who seems welcoming with his candied-filled hands. I cling onto the coattails of my mother's thoughts but she forces me out of her mind, for my ineffective, slow, rolling ramblings cannot catch her. My mother is racing too fast, trying to catch up with Destiny and change the future-determining stars. She doesn't realize that she is running in vain on a suspended treadmill; obviously she can't stop the inevitable.

Finally we arrive at the hospital where my aunt and uncle await the birth of their new son. As I swing open the door to their room, the fuzzy warmth and the flowers and the playful pastel-colored walls appeal to my senses. I am at ease, although anticipation surges through my blood. A baby cousin. The idea of someone who is holding onto the frayed edge of life, climbing up towards the heavens keeps me busy because my sheltered mind is not developed enough. For I am not fully able to

dissect and comprehend and ponder over such an abstract idea. So, frustrated by fragments of thoughts tossing in my head, I am put to sleep.

Before I know it, I am sleeping in another hospital room. But as I slowly awake, my stimulated senses alarm me, telling me that something is wrong. The white room looks sterile but it is tainted by death. I see familiar faces but they lack the warmth that they usually have. Surrounding Veena Ba they seem to have taken on her most apparent characteristic: death. Faintly inhaling and exhaling, my grandmother's body lies nearly motionless on the cold bed. Although my relatives whisper to her reminiscences as if she were fully awake, I know she isn't there. She has already started a new life somewhere else. She has finished a complete cycle and begun a new one, maybe upstairs with the angels or maybe here on the same floor as other mortals. I haven't figured it out yet.

As I glance at my relatives, their blank faces showing only dread, it is clear that none of them shares the view that Veena Ba, armed with her experiences, is on a thrilling adventure into the mysterious. It is a land or concept or event unfathomable by our dreams because anything can and does happen there or then. They only wait and watch for the end of a life. But wasn't it less than a day before that they watched and waited for the beginning? They don't realize that my grandmother's death and my cousin's birth are extraordinary events; they are both ends of the thread of life. One is a beginning and the other is supposedly an end. But I disagree that death is sorrowful and devastating. My nine-year-old mind finds

it easier to see it as a mystical beginning in the world of the unknown.

Suddenly, my uncle walks in and his eyes swiftly land on his mother. It takes awhile for him to adjust to the sight of this nearly lifeless woman. He is restless coming from the bedside of his wife and new-born son. He should be celebrating, maybe smoking a cigar, anything but weeping out of loss and not joy. Sensing that his mother's hours are limited, my uncle is attracted to my youth and takes me with him to see my cousin. He guards his precious camera so that he can take pictures for his mother, even though he knows that she is caught in a whirlpool of abyssal sleep and may never open her eyes again.

Arriving in the infant ward, I am startled by the sight of my cousin, Jay. He shares so many similarities with Veena Ba. Both are small wrinkled things lost in masses of bedding. Both are tended by several nurses and are dependent on these strangers. But most importantly, it is apparent that they are

bathed in love by vigilant relatives. However, there is one characteristic that the two clearly don't share: life. Jay although contentedly asleep, radiates with youth and energy. Twice the camera clicks. My uncle tries to capture some of Jay's affluence of youth on film for his mother, who is desperately in need of the fountain(of youth).

However, when we return to her room, it is too late. Her hands and feet are caressed lovingly by relatives. The Polaroids are placed on top of her; maybe she can see them from above. As my uncle joins in the mass mourning, I wonder what journey my grandmother is embarking on now, what new dimension she is emerging into. I hear whispers questioning why I am not crying like everyone else. My mother explains to the others that I am too young to comprehend what has just happened; I cannot conceive the finality of death. But how would I? We are all immortalized as we are threaded together and into the robe of the future.

—Aparna Majmudar, II



Pierced Ears and Little Girls

Little Suzie loved staring at the way her mother's giant hoop earrings shook back and forth when she moved. She loved how shiny her aunt's diamond studs were. She loved that her grandmother's Christmas earrings played "Jingle Bells" in an extremely high pitch. In her eyes, these bright trinkets were a true sign of being a grown-up woman.

On her eighth birthday, Suzie's mother brought her to a mall to "grow up." The little girl picked out a tiny pair of heart-shaped studs and climbed eagerly into a huge black chair. A woman, whose own ears displayed at least six pairs of the studs Suzie had just been looking at, started to clean Suzie's ears with a cotton ball and alcohol. Suddenly Suzie's dream turned to fear. She spotted a sort of instrument with a giant needle at the end. What was she doing there? "I don't want to grow up," she said to her mother, who just laughed. All she wanted was to leave the scary store and the huge chair and the clean woman and that awful needle. With eight-year-old tears, she began to cry. But her mother insisted that the woman continue.

Out came the needle. The woman roughly marked Suzie's ears with two black dots. Suzie was, by this time, shaking uncontrollably with fear and cries. Then she felt a sharp pain in her right ear. And then another. Her whole head felt as if it were on fire, stinging and burning. The woman offered a mirror so that Suzie could see the flame. But with a quick glance, the fire was extinguished. Although red, her ears had been transformed. There were two beautiful hearts,

shining and bright. Her ears still stung, but the pain was nothing compared to the greatness of what now existed. Suzie liked those earrings so much that she went back to that same store for another pair, and then another.

After a while, Suzie grew out of her earrings. She removed all but one pair. The years passed and Suzie was no more. She answered only to "Suzanne." Eventually Suzanne met a nice man, and just as in her old games of House, she was married. And on her twenty-eighth birthday, exactly twenty years after her ears were first pierced, Suzanne entered a hospital ready to give birth to a Suzie, Jr. She was so excited, for this day was all she'd dreamed of for nine months. As she climbed onto a huge hard bed, she was reminded of that day twenty years ago. She spotted the same needle, smelled the same alcohol, saw the same clean woman in front of her. Her fears were revived.

As her contractions began, Suzanne felt a few tears slide down her cheek. Only now, they were the tears of a woman. The hours passed by, but she was in a daze. The pain was so great. Finally the time came for the actual birth. For her, the pain seemed unbearable. What was she doing? She just wanted to get up and leave. Instead she settled for screaming to her husband, "You did this to me." He only laughed and encouraged the doctors to hurry. Everything about this day somehow reminded Suzanne of the day she had gotten her ears pierced: the fear, the doubts, and the fact that the person she loved most would not let her

quit. However, this “little” addition to her life took more than the two sharp pains she had felt when she had gotten her ears pierced. There were hours in that hard bed, which felt to her like a burning building. The flame that had lingered shortly in her ears had turned into a raging inferno in those twenty years! The strain that was forced onto her body was exhausting. When it was all over, the woman who had helped her did not hold up a mirror, but an angel. That heavenly face was a little red, but it was beautiful. The shining eyes and tiny hands were more than just beautiful; they were even beyond perfect. The pain she had felt was more intense than anything she could have imagined, but it disappeared in the moment that Suzanne saw her baby.

When little Suzie looked at her heart-shaped studs that day in the store, she completely forgot that they had given her pain. Even though they were the cause, she could not blame the things which she now dearly loved. When Suzanne saw her perfect little girl twenty years later, she was not in any way reminded of suffering. Instead she felt complete joy. As the years went by, Suzanne’s body and mind may have changed immensely; however, she knew even as a young girl that happiness usually comes with sacrifice. Certainly, the pain she experienced when giving birth meant a much larger sacrifice than when her ears were pierced, but then her child meant much more to her than any childhood fetish for shiny earrings.



– Gabriella Stockmayer, II

Ode to Freaks

Dressed in black combat boots,
smoking shared cigarettes, in the cold,
stood the marvelous fruits
of desires to "break with the mold".

As they huddled apart
from the regular Josephs and Janes,
I could swear with my heart
that I heard the distinct ring of chains.

And with cries of "Hail Sa-
tan!", they grudgingly entered the school.
I could only but wish for a day
when I would be so cool.

Oh, where did you go,
dwindling army of freaks? Could it be
that you've taken your mo-
hawks and black lipstick to A.C. C.?

— Will the Westie

Ride Low

Yo, I live in the land of the low riders, man,
and the ones on my street do a hundred and ten.

Bathed in fluorescent light, when they come out at night,
their dark tinted windows hide the drivers from sight.

To a loud Latin beat (word!), they cruise down my street,
with the squeal of aluminum wheels on concrete.

Though their numbers are vast, by my house they've soon passed,
and I wave an unhappy good-bye to the last.

But the spectacle's lost, through my borough they've crossed,
and now all that remains is the smell of exhaust.

— Sean Ryan, I

Ode to Westies

From the depths of West Rox-
bury, piled on charters, they come,
wearing little white socks,
and perpetually chewing their gum.

They are privileged and white,
so of course, it's not school that they fear,
rather, jeans that aren't tight,
or a shortage of piss-tasting beer.

And they stumble through life,
using charm and their dad's legacy
to earn a Westie wife,
and a bachelor's degree from B.C.

As they proudly display
their diminutive minds, I must pity
these poor kids who one day
will have jobs given them by the city.

— Freddie the Freak



Crash

Crashing is her forte
flees from allure
 admiration

to hot
 sticky
pavement.
Body bruised
 skin blue
 palms red
 eyes shot
conscience never moved

Forcing herself back
up
in the stars under water
 limbs of jell-o
 euphoric peaks
consoling pavement

Eyes wide never seeing.
Leaping
 tripping
 laughing
 bruised
stumbles unconsciously through life.

June melts scarves
crimson sunburns exposed
 hot asphalt
now inflamed
 peels
 strips
 rapes
bare skin.

Under yellow beams of truth
white lies burn black.

Flat on her face
 peering up
a bus pulls away
in the vacant seat
 a shadow
 mirage
 apparition
 phantom
rides in her place.

Slipping through fingers
flashing before eyes
 ticket in hand
 head in gutter
she chokes on her own exhaust.

— Julia Jones, II



The Crowded Train

The crowded, stuffy train lurched and ground to a halt with a grating shriek. I mentally winced, as I stared fixedly out the window at everything and nothing on the walls of the dreary tunnel. The doors of the train, opening with a hiss, admitted a faint odor into the cabin of the train. Recognizing the smell as the scent of stale urine that pervades each subway station, I dismissed it, concentrating on the bare patch of plaster that winked out from under the flaking, black paint. The failure of the train to move immediately caught my attention, and I swiveled my weary gaze to the door of the train, as if my glance could aid in the boarding of the passengers. The station was very busy, and a throng of hopefuls awaited the chance to board the already burdened train. Congratulating myself on having obtained a single seat, I turned my attention from the doors and returned to my contemplation of the plaster patch. The train continued to wait, almost a full minute more, until the aisle next to me was almost completely full. The sound of faint humming touched my ears as, suddenly, the distasteful perfume of alcohol and sweat, mixed with urine assaulted my nostrils. I turned again to seek out the source of the smell and as I heard the gasps from those whom the odor had just reached, I saw the bum.

Oblivious to the shock and distaste of those around him, he clambered slowly onto the train, stumbling once on the second step. As he fell, he grabbed the shiny, aluminum pole next to him, to steady himself. Leaning on the pole

for nominal support, he brushed roughly against the left side of a young pastel-clad mother, who was carrying her infant in a sling. The young woman grimaced and gasped softly, turning to the right to shield her baby from the old man. Softly, the doors hissed shut as the other waiting passengers declined to follow the bum onto the train. As there was no need for him to move farther into the train, he stayed next to the young matron, humming happily to himself.

Others on the train were not so happy. The bum stank. He was filthy, his clothes so obscured with dirt that the original color of his one-piece jumpsuit was completely indistinguishable. His gray hair hung in lank, greasy strands, long enough to brush the quivering shoulder of the young woman each time he moved. Like me, the other passengers had abandoned their train-time pursuits, concentrating on the behavior of the bum. The passengers around him had slowly inched their way out of the stairwell and had attempted to find space farther away. The only person unable to move was the mother, by virtue of the fact that his grimy fingers were still clasping the aluminum pole, forming a blockade with his arm. The smell had escalated, fermented in the enclosed space, until many passengers were compelled to place hands, scarves, papers, t-shirts, anything, over their noses to block it. The two women in front of me exchanged identical looks of disgust as they brought their manicured fingers up to their noses.

The mother was beginning to become upset, whimpering slightly and clutching her baby's downy head. Seeing her distress, one of the seated men stood and loudly proclaimed that she should sit down. The volume of the declaration and the politely whispered "Excuse me" of the

matron had no visible effect on the bum, who continued to grip the pole and hum, just as before. Finally, able to bear it no longer, the matron pushed by

the bum, with her back to his arm, shielding her baby, and gratefully sank down in the proffered seat. For a moment, the bum was confused, his lined face crumpling pathetically, but then his skin smoothed back to its original lines and he continued to hum the barely recognizable tune of the "Star Spangled Banner." Most of the passengers had turned away in a lately remembered show of etiquette, but I still sat and stared, fascinated by the grayish label on his jumpsuit which read "WAR R." Two letters were ob-

scured by grime, but I guessed that the label had once read "WARNER." His last name.

The bum got off at the next stop, one stop from his boarding. When he shuffled slowly off the train and into the station, his arms swinging slowly, militarily, the insignia of the Air Force

was visible on his back, stenciled in black. The entire train breathed deeply, and the silence, unnoticed until then, was broken by the drone of speculative chatter. The



mother let out a sigh of relief, stroking the blond fuzz on her baby's tender head. "Disgusting," "Disgraceful," "Revolting," I heard. But I didn't listen any more as I turned my head to stare blindly out the window of the train, my attention not focused on the plaster patches or billboards, but on the wings of the eagle I had seen stenciled on the back of Warner's uniform.

— Saamra Mekuria-Grillo, I

Fade to Black

It had been a hard day. One of those days when very little went right and all your little problems seemed to attack you at once. Daily stress, Joe thought, was the leading cause of illness. There was his commute, for example. It took Joe three and a half-hours to reach his office this morning due to an accident on the expressway. The traffic had backed up for miles. It was a humid day and the air conditioning offered little comfort. Joe was stuck in traffic again now, on his ride home. That was another thing that irritated Joe. The route was always the same. It was the same types and colors of cars, same people behind the wheel, and the same fools who cut him off at Exit 9. So there was the commute.

Traffic was only one thing that annoyed Joe. Television disgusted him. He was fed up with the fear that TV bred. He hated the five-minute commercial breaks and the mind-numbing, soul-sucking game shows that were sponsored by them. Sitcoms were the worst. Every night a different ensemble cast was living through his television. People who escaped life through lethal sarcasm, tawdry cynicism, and dry, oftentimes dull humor. Joe hated TV with a passion, a distaste that was only matched by his hatred for bad drivers, which Joe saw in great abundance on his commute. So there was television, also.

Bills, rent, his girlfriend, his job, and all of life's little annoyances were starting to seep into Joe's skin. He imagined it as a film, a residue of annoyance that wouldn't come off no matter how hard he scrubbed. Joe was always on the verge of laughter, or perhaps it was madness; Joe was having a hard time differentiating between them. He was hazy on where TV ended and real life began. He would watch Drew Carey melt into Jerry Seinfeld who melted into Joe's boss, and the change came about so seamlessly. He drove to and from work the same way every day. He had become robotic, losing a sense of

who he was and why he was here. He did things without question or emotion, for that matter. But Joe didn't care anymore. The world had begun to fade to black.

The last thing Joe wanted was to have a run-in with his girlfriend. They had quarreled earlier in the week and had not spoken since. Joe was almost grateful; it was one less headache to deal with. But when Joe arrived home, her shrill voice exploded from the answering machine, practically taunting him to throw the machine out the window. He wanted to. He wanted to feel the weight of the small, black box in his hands. He wanted to feel the adrenalin pump as he threw open the window and heaved the machine into the street. He wanted to squeal with glee as he watched it smash upon hitting the pavement, giggling with pleasure as the components rolled in the road. But instead, he listened to the rest of the message and took the break-up gracefully.

Joe went up to his room to change from his standard shirt-and-tie work uniform. He wanted to sink into his jeans and feel the warmth of his broken-in, old sweatshirt against his bare chest. They were his joys in life, his old clothes. Joe changed silently, as he always did, and made himself a sandwich.

Joe opened the window to his bedroom and sat on the sill, looking out to the world below. Scurry along, you insignificant ants, he thought to himself. Cling to each other as if it means anything. He laughed at the thought and shut the window. He stared out the window for a few more seconds before turning around and seeing the man sitting on his bed. Joe nearly died of fright. He had very heavy security, a wise move considering the section of the city he lived in. He had two deadbolts and a very elaborate alarm system to which only he knew the code. But here was a man sitting on Joe's bed, smoking a cigarette, no less. The man was of medium build with very broad shoulders. He looked very strong, Joe thought

to himself. The man had gray eyes that were very calm, and he had an air of confidence and warmth about him that made Joe feel better simply by being in his presence. The man was dressed in a flowing, black trenchcoat with jeans and a pair of new Adidas running shoes. The man looked to be about thirty or so, and he had a long scar above his right eye that went all the way down to his mouth. Joe's mouth was dry and his throat had locked up so the man spoke first.

"Are you Joseph Miller?" he asked, inhaling on the cigarette. Joe managed to stammer a yes.

"Very good. For a moment, I was afraid I was in the wrong house." The man chuckled at this before continuing. "My name is. . . well, let's just say that you can call me Pete. How do you do." He extended his hand to Joe. Joe shook it and immediately put his hands in his pockets.

"What do you want, Pete? If you want to rob me, go ahead. I don't have much and I won't breath a word to the authorities. . ."

Pete waved his hand at Joe.

"Rob you? Goodness, no. I am not a robber. I have been, shall we say, placed here by a higher power. I am here to make you an offer. You are actually a very lucky man, Mr. Miller."

Pete took another drag on the cigarette. A Dunhill, Joe noticed.

"What sort of offer," Joe asked hesitantly.

"Well, it has come to my employer's attention that you've been having a bit of an uphill struggle as of late. Actually, to put it in layman's terms, your life has been wretched recently, am I correct?"

He smiled at Joe to let him know that he meant nothing malicious by the remark. Joe looked down at his shoeless feet and then back at Pete.

"So, Mr. Miller. Would you care to hear my offer or would you rather I leave? It matters little to me what you decide."

Joe was thoughtful for a minute. As depressed

and unhappy as he was, he was positive he could not feel worse. Any offer would have to be a better offer, he decided.

"Okay, Pete. Let's hear your offer."

"You're absolutely sure that this is the decision you want to make?"

"I'm positive. More positive than that my name is Joe."

"All right."

Pete stubbed out the cigarette on the palm of his hand. Amazingly, no ashes or burns were left. Pete took the butt of the cigarette and threw it toward the ceiling. It vanished before it got nine inches out of his hand. Joe was suddenly aware that this was no ordinary deal. Thousands of questions were racing through his head but he managed to suppress them all. He swallowed hard and awaited Pete's sales pitch.

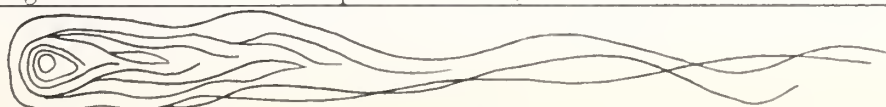
"My offer, Joseph, is this. How would you like to be rid of all your daily problems? No more rent to worry about or bills to pay. No more commute. Hell, no more job, if you don't want to go. What I'm saying is you can live a normal life. You can stay in your luxurious two-bedroom apartment completely rent-free and with a steady source of income. You don't even have to leave your house. From now on, all the money you receive will go straight to you. No taxes, all profit. In return, you give me your soul."

"My soul? Why do you want my soul?"

"Let's just say I'd have a use for it. No asking questions or this offer becomes void and you forfeit your life. I'll be back in a day or two. I expect you to have an answer."

Pete snapped his fingers twice and was gone. Joe stood there, staring at where Pete had been. He shook his head as if to wake himself but he was clearly awake and the event was totally real.

The next morning, Joe woke up with little memory of what had happened the previous evening. He showered, dressed and drove to work as robotically as any



other day. He struggled through his day, thinking of Pete's offer constantly. It had become paradise to Joe. He decided he would accept the offer. He decided to sell his soul.

Wednesday night rolled around and there was no sign of Pete. It had been a week and Joe was growing impatient. He figured that Pete was letting him sweat a little. He decided it was a small price to pay in exchange for absolute freedom. When Thursday and Friday passed, Joe grew more anxious. He came home expecting to find Pete somewhere in the house but, as usual, he was nowhere to be found.

Weeks flowed into months and months flowed into years. The only reason Joe kept going on, kept dealing with everything was because of Pete's promise. It was because of Pete, all because of Pete. One night Joe came home and trudged up his stairs. He unlocked his door and checked his answering machine. Joe's mother was begging Joey to come home for the holidays. Joe had the same vision he had had five years earlier. The image of the answering machine crashing in the street.

Joe thought about things for a second. He thought about his job. He thought about his commute. He thought about the mind-numbing, soul-sucking game shows and he thought about the idiotic commercials that still sponsored them. He thought about Pete's offer. Joe went to his bedroom and put on his jeans and ratty old sweatshirt. He opened the window and looked outside. Nothing had changed. The people were still scurrying, still clinging to each other.

When he turned back, he saw Pete sitting on his bed, the exact same way he had been five years earlier. Joe stepped out of the window and on to the small ledge that was below it. It was all because of Pete. Joe swallowed hard and turned to look at his apartment for the last time.

— David Esposito, III

The Good-bye

Standing there,
alone,
with him, but still
alone.
I stare through his
translucent blue eyes
as a sharp wind pierces my back
with goose flesh.
Leaves fall silently to the cold,
foreboding ground,
quietly awaiting the "crunch"
of an unforgiving soul.
The awkwardness of the night
embraces me,
like he used to
and a perfect diamond falls from my eye
as the smoky-gray breath that
dances off his lips
whispers
good-bye.

— Stephanie Gonzalez, IV



Timeless Woman

Tick, Tock
Time passing but not evident
There she sits, rocking and knitting, rocking and knitting
Tick, Tock
Time passing but not noticed
The sweater almost finished for her grandson's birthday
Tick, Tock
Time passing, it seems to waft into her life, never staying long enough to be relevant
The sweater is finished, now she can go to bed and rest her arthritic fingers
Tick, Tock
Time passing, how long had she been in bed?, She didn't know
The portrait of her beloved husband, God rest his soul, was now shrouded in moonlight
Tick, Tock
Time passing, the moment is gone and with it the joys, sorrows, pleasures, pains, hopes, and disappointments
The old mother thinks, "Yes, life has been worth living and now I can rest." She goes to sleep for the final time.
Tick, Tock
Time passing, it avoids the old mother's house whenever possible
The family arrives for a visit and find her shrouded in morning glory, her face relaxed in a smile, and it seemed for a while that time had never really touched her.

— James Rudd, III

Can You See Yourself? A Look Back at the Theophrastian Genre

Laziness is the state of sleeping while fully awake and aware of surroundings.

The Lazy Man is one who lies on the rocks outside his cave, under the heat of a morning sun, and allows his mate and children to gather fruits for his early meal. Whereas his neighboring cavemen are out in the trees exploring their new environment, discovering fire, and trying to invent the wheel, he is being fed grapes by his subservient mate. Such slothfulness and supine inactivity should not be mistaken for mental or physical disability since the lazy man is not depressed and usually has limbs in good working order.

The Modern Lazy man is no better off than his ancestor of long ago. He sits with the window open to the fresh morning air and watches the pleasant weather on television. If a slight chill should enter his body, he does not stretch his arm to fetch a warm woolen garment next to him, but rather sits there harboring his weather-induced goose bumps. He skips breakfast and starves rather than exert a few ounces of energy for the acquisition of that commodity. If he should misplace the remote control, he summons the dog to sniff it out rather than do a quick search under the sofa. Once the important device is found, he switches to the Discovery Channel and enjoys a show on the many new technological advances (e.g., robots, voice command computers and self navigational vehicles) that are anticipated to make a Future Lazy Man's life easier.

— Alfa Tiruneh, II

My Search For An Unlocked Bathroom: A Tale Of An Imaginary High School

I'd bought too many cans of juice,
'twas the high noon sun, I guess,
and now all my internal plumbing
was quite deeply in distress.

Like a lion starved for weeks,
the ghosts of things I'd drunk before
were coming back to haunt me,
pounding at my chamber door.

I plowed through the infernal masses,
churning like a diesel train,
passing giant windows showing
me the drizzling, fresh spring rain.

I finally found the heavy door and,
hoping my wait would now be brief,
lunged straight forward with all my might,
welcoming the sure relief.

I should have looked before I leapt,
for on a card with gilded border,
I read while rubbing my injured shoulder,
"This bathroom is out of order."

Across the hall and down the stairs,
my shoulder now was throbbing, too,
but that was not as important as
that other thing I had to do.

Finally, another door,
this one free of foreboding seal,
but locked as tightly as a fort.
Since when are these things latched with
steel?

Back among the throng I flew,
with my knickers in a twist.
I cursed my fate! I punched a wall!
I yelled in pain! I clutched my fist!

But then help was on the horizon
like a bolt out of the blue,
a Bathroom! O Sweet Bathroom!
And the door was open, too.

I was in there in no time at all,
and feeling better in even less,
when someone came up behind me,
someone in a bright blue dress.

Folks, I'll end with some advice
I wish that I had known before.
No matter how bad your case may be,
check the gender on the door!!!

— Andrew Barr, IV

Ode to a Country Mouse

To you, oh bespectacled man of years past (born too late, we both agree), you approached skeptical me in that suave way of yours, and as you wooed me with talk of Zen Buddhism and meditation, all hope of escape flew out the window. You say you can't wait for summer—we'll run through fields of wildflowers in the sun, and at night, we'll lie in the grass and listen to the peepers. A country boy, with bare feet and a kerchief covering your unkempt hair, and I laugh as you beckon me and we dance to Fats Domino. We take long walks to Nowhere(I'm sure they had a purpose once, but when I stare into your hazel eyes, all else is forgotten). Your eyes and your freckles dance at me as you call me "City Girl" and laugh at my insecurities, and when I sulk in the corner, you take me in your arms and tell me I'm beautiful, again.

— Daniela Poles, II



Nature

From hot to cold to warm to freezing
Mother Nature has her seasons
Everywhere around the world
All temperatures are soon to be hurled
To the top of the line to the bottom of the line
To the coldest days to the warmest days
But what brings the moon and sun so bright
It's Mother Nature's own day and night
Behold the fairytales foretold
The wondrous mysteries nature holds
How many stars are in the sky?
How many skies do pass by?
How many birds are in the air?
How many raindrops could it bear?
For me I think it's good to live
With what Mother Nature has to give

— Natasha Printemps, VI

Flowing in the JP River

You can feel it in the air. You've felt it before, and you're sure you feel it now. Silence. We are pulled in by some strange, almost magnetic force. It is getting stronger. By now we all feel it. We abandon our tasks at hand and walk in together. It is almost here.

We huddle around, arms entwined with shoulders, forming a massive ring of M.C.s, all bearing serious, unflinching faces and transfixed eyes. We prepare for lift off. Into the new dimension. The Cypher.

The beat starts up. . . The heads start moving up and down. The needle of adrenaline stabs into each and everyone of us with immense force. The feeling permeates our brains. Simultaneously, we chant "A Pete Nice. A Petey Nice." Louder. Louder. Louder. Faster. Faster. Louder. "A Pete Nice. A PETEY NICE!" He starts. Explosion. We are no longer in Jamaica Plain. We have entered the Cypher. The Cypher is the dimension of freestyle. Freestyle rapping. Pete Nice is on the "mike." He's ripping it. Tearing it to shreds. He's on a roll. A pause. All of a sudden—BANG! A line that sends the crowd into eruption of volcanic proportion. Another rhyme. Another. A pause. And then comes the dagger in the heart. Pete Nice is done. The microphone lies slain. The masses celebrate the triumph of their savior, who walks away into the shadows to contemplate his exhibition. And so the next M.C. boldly steps before the mike. Only the strong, or foolish, can even think of doing so after such a feat.

This is a Cypher. J.P. style.

Cyphers are a regular Friday night event of the boys of the so called "J.P Crew." The term Cypher means presentation of freestyle rapping. It consists of a circle of boys (those who actually rap are titled M.C.'s), a beatman, one who delivers mouth-made drum simulations and rhythms to which the M.C. raps, and an M.C. who is put on the spotlight, or, as we put it, is "on the (non-existent) mike." The M.C. on the mike must then freestyle or spontaneously spurt out rhyming (preferably) verses that stay on the tempo of the beatman's rhythm.

Cyphers are usually the life of the party, gathering, or even public hanging out session, that the J.P. boys take part in. They are eagerly awaited at all of the above, but never forced. A Cypher cannot be forced; it happens when the time is right. But it always happens. There are no racial or cultural barriers in a Cypher. Everyone is just an M.C. All different types of people have attempted to "rip the mike," ranging from Irish guys from South Boston to alternative white guys to skinny Cape Verdean guys to seemingly All-American presidents. They're all M.C.'s, but few are ill M.C.'s. To reach this status, you've got to have talent, and a lot of it. Freestyling is incredibly difficult to do well.

It takes amazing quick-thinking skills, a large vocabulary, general knowledge (in order to make metaphors and similes), and most of all a knack for rhyming. Few men can flow (freestlye) with skill. But those who can are idolized, emulated, and given the utmost respect by onlookers and up and coming M.C.'s.

There are a few different types of freestyle methods:

Trite Rhymes - The Common Style: This is the style employed by most M.C.'s. It is usually seen in up-and-coming ones, beginners, or those who just don't have any ingenuity. There are a few basic words that these people use, and simply repeat over and over, in rhymes that have been used countless times formerly by other Common Man M.C.'s.

Rhymes like:

"My name is John and I'm here to say, I rip the mike every single day.

or

"When it comes to flowin' I ain't no fool, I am ill, and I go to school."

But it is usually a building block for new M.C.'s to gain confidence and get a feel for freestyling. Those who have been flowing for a while and still rap in this style are seen as rejects, losers, and "mike-wasters," and are often told to remove themselves from the spotlight. Believe me, it can be a brutal and scarring experience for idiotic youngsters who dare to venture upon the microphone with no skill.

M.C. Sermons - A Capella Style: This is a new style seen very rarely. It was in fact co-created by the illustrious author of this piece. It is basically a style in which an M.C. starts rhyming without a beat in the background, and thus has no obligation to stay on pace. It is a style that allots far more freedom to make interesting, original rhymes as a result of the lack of beat. It often consists of two M.C.'s rhyming back and forth, in an informative, explanatory manner. For example:

Sam: "Excuse me Mr. President, but you can't be a resident of my domain, because I reign supreme, I'm even in your dreams in fact, you're whack, what do you think of that?"

Peter: "I'm whack? Actually, I'm quite the contrary, I'm actually like an eagle and you're like a canary, Now you can guess which one's better? Your style stinks like limburger, mine tastes good like cheddar, but that's a lie because I don't eat cheese, cuz in case you didn't know, I rock lactose intolerant stiez [style]"

This goes on and on for a while, the subject ever changing. It is all complete nonsense, but an enjoyable experience nonetheless.

Insane - Pete Nice Style: This style is legendary. When Pete Nice rhymes in this style, spectators go wild. It is by far the fan favorite. It is hard to explain in words, because it's so unlike any other style. One cannot label it in a certain way, because the thing that makes the style so amazing is that it is constantly changing. Nothing can be expected, because what is said is entirely opposite of the expectation. There are, however, a few patterns that Pete Nice is known for. A major one is the voice range. He uses his ability to create different types of voices most effectively when rapping. Even if he is about to say a Trite Rhyme, he creates a wacky voice to say the line, which always overshadows the blandness of the line. Pete Nice is also known for his ingenuity, his ability to create rhymes out of words that no one would ever think of putting together, and his shocking one-liners that are so creative and zany, make crowds go crazy. Example:

(The beat starts up, but Pete, talking to another M.C. is in his own world and doesn't seem to notice. After various summonings, he suddenly turns to the crowd) "Me? 1-2-3."

"Pete Neat, pickety-packin' heat, coming with the flows like Miami"

"Your style is whack, but then so is my flow lyrically I go and go and go and go and go!" (The genius of this line is in the change of tone from a hardcore M.C. to a little, puny rascal in the shouting of the last "GO!")

"Schizophrenic Hellenic, bringing forth vast pillage and destruction with a style so phat that I need liposuction"

In addition, Pete Nice uses contorted body movements to add to the effect of his presentation. It is unlike anything ever seen before in the world of freestyling. A few have tried to replicate it and have been completely unsuccessful. This is why Pete Nice is a highly esteemed hero in J.P. folklore.

Tight Rhymes Mastery - Witty Wiz Style: This is the pinnacle of Mt. Cypher. The only master of freestyle among the J.P. Crew is Warren a.k.a. Witty Wiz. He is Yota and all other M.C.'s are Jedis-in-training. Except Pete Nice. He's Chewbacca. Witty Wiz has mastered the art of flowing through years of experience and training, and he is now the standard by which all other M.C.s attempt to live. Mastery of freestyle is coming with a strong performance no matter what circumstance. It's the ability to produce under any pressure or spur-of-the-moment situation. And it's the ability to produce with flair. Warren's rhymes are always on point. They are full of flavor and imagery, combined with style and clever rhyme scheme. And his rhymes all make sense and fit the subject which he is rhyming. His constant allusions to elements of society reflect his vast general knowledge. It seems as though every other phrase a metaphor or simile pops up, not just any metaphor or simile, a creative, Wiz-style metaphor or simile. He is a master of the pun and play-on-words, and he frequently incorporates double-meanings into his rhymes. He is, very simply, incredible.

"I trick Sherlocks and keep detectives tentative,
put it all in perspective, deceptive representative."

"So please, step back from the skinny man dies,
cause you can't emulate the Portuguese stiez.

Cuz young g.'s who step are falling like bungees"

Witty Wiz never ceases to amaze M.C.'s with his constant influx of creative rhymes. However, he is often overshadowed by the Pete Nice and his flagrant style. Warren's style is calm, collective, and people listen to him in awe and respect. Warren's style invokes more of a subliminal feeling in the onlookers.

This is what we do in J.P. for kicks. Sure, laugh if you want, but for us it's serious stuff. While freestyle rapping is a growing phenomenon, surely there is no Cypher in the world like that of Jamaica Plain. We are proud of this unique, esoteric ritual. We hold in high esteem the fact that we are different, the fact that we use our minds in a creative fashion. As my friends and I progress in the diverging paths of our own lives, soon to depart to bigger and better things in college and beyond, we know that we'll treasure the moments we shared together along the way. Memories of those midnight Cyphs in the Arboretum. Memories of a crazy Pete Nice punchline, and the outburst of the masses in approval. Memories of that silhouette of a lanky Portuguese kid and a short and stout beatman in a trench coat walking and bobbing in unison to the beat, dispersing verbal magic into the cool winter air.

— Sam Graham-Felsen, II

Lyrics

*I'm only pretty sure that I can't take anymore of my Semi-Charmed life. Life is a Bitter Sweet Symphony,
and in it I can be a million different people from one day to the next.
But all I do is drive myself into Virtual Insanity wondering What is a jungle?*

*So I went down to Alice's Restaurant to clear my throat, while carrying my
implements of destruction, welcoming myself to the jungle.
Then I saw the man signing MMMBop, trying to trip like I do.
But I couldn't believe he became a junkie 'cause heroin is so passe.*

*Then he said, "Hey man, take a walk on the wild side. I mean, I'm a joker, I'm a smoker, I'm a midnight toker
with naked women on my mind, I'm Casey Jones. By the way
Where Have all the Cowboys Gone?"*

"There 'side ya head with Snoop Doggy Dog, Casey" and I left.

*And There she was justa walking down the street singing "Doo-waa-didy."
So I said to her "Come on baby, light my fire." But she just laughed and walked away with my Pink
Heart into the Hallways of Illusion never to be seen again.*

*It was raining men now, and I couldn't be more alone.
She left me on a one-way train to a one-way town with no way of gettin' around, she had the keys to my jeep.
Currently I was entering the 4th season of loneliness singing "BYE BYE Ms. American Pie"
while the Memory Remained.*

As I pondered weak and weary the world stopped again.



*The Man with the Red Right Hand pulled me into
his alley.
I got knocked down, but I got up again and "You're
never gonna keep me down!" I yelled, but he did.*

*Boom
BOOm
BOOM*

I never got back up.

*Every day is a winding road up East 1999 Eternal
that ends at the Crossroads,
I'll see you when you get there.*

— Brian Danz, IV

Riding High

I represent the 39 bus. The bus runs from Forest Hills down Centre Street and Huntington Avenue to the Back Bay and the adjacent Copley Square; it is a staple in my transportation around the wonderful town of Bean. The bus, however, is more than just a bus. It is a shuttle that takes its passengers on an amazing journey.

Before taking this journey it would make sense to get to know your shipmates a little more. At full capacity you may be traveling in very close quarters with as many as eighty of them. They are of both sexes, all races, and ages ranging from pre-natal embryos to senior God-is-barely-still-allowing-them-to-walk citizens. Your companions will be hoodlums, Jehova Witnesses, students, politicians, babies, mothers, perverts, fathers, artists, vandals, rich, poor, kitchen help and businessmen and women decked in designer duds.

I have seen, heard, and smelled many weird and ridiculous things on the 39. I have been in threatening situations with drunks and hooded youths. I have also had two men in navy blue khakis and white shirts give me their thoughts on God, follow me off the bus, and then try to persuade me to bring them to my boy's house, my original destination. If you ride the bus at the right time, you could get lucky and spot the midget who sits on his porch smoking Phillies and blunts.

Once, a friend and I were getting on the bus and while we were boarding he bumped into this old woman. Well, he didn't realize what he had done because he didn't excuse himself or say sorry or anything. We walked to the very back of the bus and sat down. My friend casually opened a Little Debbie's snack and began munching away, oblivious to the tiny ball of anger that was approaching us. The lady sat down on the sideways seat in front of the right rear corner and poked her head inches in front of my comrade's face. Her rasping voice squealed, "I hope you die. I hope you choke on that and die right here on this #\$*! bus. You wanna #\$*! fight me, you little bastard." The swears continued until my buddy

unboarded the bus and I was left alone with this old woman who talked like a street thug. She apologized for talking so dirty. She said it was because she was German-Irish; you know how those German Irish are. Well, now you have an idea of the people you'll be riding with and we can talk about the trip itself. Since many Latin School students get on the bus at the Huntington Avenue stop, this is where we will start the journey. From Longwood and Huntington Avenue to Forest Hills you will pass, interlaced with homes and apartment buildings, over forty-five eating establishments and convenience stores, three banks, two housing projects, five liquor stores, five gas stations, two churches, two African hair-braiding centers, the center for Urban Ministerial Education, the North American Indian Center of Boston, the Center for Blood Research, a fire station, an orphanage, two nursing homes, two florists, a chiropractic office, various hospitals, schools, and other fine institutions, a plumbing and heating company, the MSPCA, the Loring Greenough House (which holds a spot on the National Historic Register), and a defunct prosthetic company. In short, the bus shuttles you through America. It is a route on which you can choose to buy crack or gold. You can choose to eat at an Ethiopian restaurant or a sushi bar, get your hair braided at Fatima's African Hair Braiding Center or get a swift cut at Sally Sal's barber shop. This is America: choices and differences. You can get off the bus whenever you want and no matter where you exit you will find a different example of the individuals that paint the US of A.

You could argue that the 39 takes its passengers through life. On just a single block of the 39 bus route one can see a hospital, an orphanage, regular houses, a nursing home and finally, even a funeral home. Think about it. I represent the 39.

— *Danny Cochrane, II*

Gacela VIII por Federico Garcia Lorca

Gacela de la muerte oscura

Quiero dormir el sueño de las manzanas,
alejarme del tumulto de los cementerios.
Quiero dormir el sueño de aquel niño
que quería cortarse el corazón en alta mar.

No quiero que me repitan que los muertos no
pierden la sangre;
que la boca podrida sigue pidiendo agua.
No quiero enterarme de los martirios que da la
hierba,
ni de la luna con boca de serpiente
que trabaja antes de amanecer.

Quiero dormir un rato,
un rato, un minuto, un siglo;
que hay un establo de oro en mis labios;
que soy el pequeño amigo del viento Oeste;
que soy la sombra inmensa de mis lágrimas.

Cubreme por la aurora con un velo
porque me arrojará punados de hormigas,
y moja con agua dura mis zapatos
para que resbale la pinza de su alacrán.

Porque quiero dormir el sueño de las manzanas
para aprender un llanto que me limpie de tierra;
porque quiero vivir con aquel niño oscuro
que quería cortarse en alta mar.

Ghazal of the Dark Death

I want to sleep the dream of the apples,
to withdraw from the tumult of cemeteries.
I want to sleep the dream of that child
who wanted to cut his heart on the high sea.

I don't want to hear that the dead lose no blood;
that their decaying mouths still beg for water.
I don't want to learn of grass-given martyrdom,
or of the moon with its serpent's tongue
that coils before dawn.

I want to sleep a moment,
a moment, a minute, a century;
but let it be known that I have not died;
that there lies a harbor of gold in my lips;
that I am the gentle friend of the West wind;
that I am the vast shadow of my own tears.

Cradle me in a veil at dawn
for she will throw fistfuls of ants,
and dust my shoes with heavy water
to slide off her scorpion's sting.

For I want to sleep the dream of the apples
to learn a requiem that cleanses me of this earth;
for I want to live within that dark child
who wanted to cut his heart on the high sea.

— Kim Dang, I



My Room

I was a baby.

My room had a crib,
 a floor full of toys,
 I sat on the floor,
 and played with Barbies,
 and learned to cry,
 when I wasn't happy.

I became a child.

My room had a twin-sized bed,
 a table full of candies,
 I sat on my chair,
 and made many origami,
 and I learned to giggle,
 when I was happy.

I became a teenager.

My room was furnished
 with a stereo system.
 I went wild dancing
 in my own room,
 and I learned to use makeup,
 because I wanted to look pretty.

Now, I am seventeen.

My room is filled
 with the sound of
 my own violin.
 I have learned to be myself,
 and I have learned to feel pretty,
 without makeup.

— Nan Ding, *I*



Rhapsody

His smile
makes me wish
that I were the
reason.
The slow parting
of his lips as
his cheeks pull
them into a
full grin...
When he laughs
he smiles even
wider.
How is that
possible?
If I were the
reason. . .
then my
ecstasy would
rival his
smile.

— Erica Hanson, I

What They Say, They Say

They say I am too young to know what love is,
but how do they know?
When my sister was born,
I was old enough to know how *happy* felt.
When my aunt got married,
I was old enough to know how *rejoice* felt.
And when my grandmother died,
I was old enough to feel *pain* and *sorrow*.
In all of these cases, I was able to feel the same
things as the adults around me.
If I was old enough to feel those feelings then,
why am I too young to feel love now?
They say I am too young to know what love is,
but how do they know?
They don't know what I feel.

— Melissa Cooper, III

Someone Special

3:00 on a rainy Wednesday afternoon
I spoke to someone special and told her the time

Knowing that she and I had never spoken before
Not knowing if she and I would ever speak again

I spoke to someone special
And she cast a spell over my heart

— Marcus Stacy, VI

Listen

Hers were the words you find rarely, that
whisper more yet rage no less than beasts and wild
things. She was intelligent, with pronounced shoul-
ders, and pronounced hips, with her little pro-
nounced feet tightly, smartly crossed. She was rich
milk slowly boiling, frothing, and choking with
popping life as when she spoke. Her words were
like spools of thread, broke into color again and
again lancing brilliant, rhyming strings so that we
all heard her. And loved her.

— Amy Barahona, II

Refrigerator Poem

She told me
Grow
Follow the wings on my
dreams
Turn my cries into
butterflies
born upon trees.

So I went to the garden
and asking no magic
ran to the sky
and the only thing I could do was
Fly.

— Sarah Colvario, II

Sitting Pretty, in My Mother's Chair

I sit pretty in my mother's chair gazing into her mysterious eyes
I'm wondering if she knows about all the lies
She told me she was sick, but I am very quick
And I know that she's not when I hear the whiskey bottle's click

I sit pretty in my mother's chair letting her comb my curls nice and tight
Waiting to hear the next lie of "Honey, I'm alright"
It hurts me knowing that my heart is heavy with pain and can not grow
I see the symbol of death waiting to consume her soul, the black crow

I always wanted to be just like Mother, strong and always courageous
It's outrageous that she would hide so much pain from the ones she loves
I cry at night because I know what Mother does just ain't right
And I'm sorry to say internally I hate Mother and her fight

I sit pretty in my mother's chair feeling ugly like she doesn't love me
Waiting for the day for her to say it's okay and really mean it
Until then I will sit in my mother's chair pretending to be fine
And internally hoping that nightfall doesn't mean another cup of wine

— Damita Johnson, III



Coloring Water

I.
Birth,
an array of colors,
sights and sounds flickering all around.
Fresh and strong,
like fire making its presence felt.
Eating away, consuming everything around it.
And also warm.

II.
Childhood,
an appreciation for movement,
trying things for the first time,
the alphabet, and counting,
again and again.
Madeleine and Eloise,
happy-days-to-happy-nights,
or if not,
warm milk.

III.
Budding,
soon to blossom,
a woman will come.
The first red,
a life to follow.
So many moments.
Flying by
seemingly unaware,
and then,
all of a sudden
perhaps time is not an illusion.
The years surface.
Almost full.

IV.
Finally,
all so easily,
like the inevitable tide,
ebb and flow to wake,
and the parallel selves merge,
young and old,
backwards now,
as quickly as it came,
the zenith fades to shadow time.

Only memories.
Smaller now,
like a child,
only quiet,
all inside,
memories building
until so full,
overflowing.

V.
The call,
life resonates,
and she bids you come.
The drain, the drone,
whining,
like a full bath being sucked in, up
and away.

— Adrienne Campbell-Holt, I

Mother

Her pout is that of a child but her occasional tears transcend mere adulthood. The wrinkles that encompass her usually playful blue eyes reveal her years. She has never sat out a day in her life; she has never thought of living within limits. Her countless gold fillings and round little belly are signs of her indulgences. Her hands are strong, but never rough; her motherly embrace is much the same. Her hugs are like the resounding sounds of a Southern church choir, firm and surrounding. And each night, she needs a kiss before she falls asleep.

— Gabriella Stockmayer, II

The Receiving End

The phone talks to me
it doesn't listen
or the words never existed

Words separate us
and I bear the weight of each

I could lift a building
and still
you would lie alone

Salt water stings like nails
and a broken record keeps telling me
you're dying

If God would never create
a puzzle without pieces
why is this receiver
all I can grasp in this world

I try
I can't
Talk to me. . .

— Jonah Goldstein, II

Bonfire

There is an enormous roaring bonfire in the middle of the gigantic grassy meadow. The fire is burning with a bright orange-red tint to it. The heat and light of the fire smother approaching people carrying red-colored buckets. Some begin to throw the contents of their buckets into the fire...

I've been here before. Ever since I decided to follow Him, I have always done this. At first, I took the time to think about all the things that I did. As time passed, however, I threw my papers into the Refiner's fire without a thought. I did what so many others did. We didn't look at each item or throw them individually, we just dumped them into the fire. I didn't make time to do it, or even to watch them burn. My load, however became heavier and heavier each night. I didn't understand what was happening. I guess no one did.

One night I saw something that I never expected to see. Joshua, a friend and who had the heaviest buckets, sat down and began to unfold each paper in his buckets and read them. Some continued to throw in papers, but most of us, including myself, just stood and watched him as he unfolded each paper and read. Tears began to flow down his cheeks. He was reading the account of each and every wrong he had committed against himself, his friends, the Fire Marshal. After reading each paper, Joshua threw it into the fire and watched it burn as it became ashes. When he reached the last sheet, he stared into it. Reading the contents very slowly, he wondered if he was willing to give it up. Finally, with tears flowing onto the paper, he stood up, dropping the sheet into the fiery crucible. As the paper slowly met its doom, Joshua's face began to form a smile, a smile in the midst of repentance. The paper burst into a fiery blaze of extinction.

As he turned away and slowly walked back home, I stared at my bucket and tightened my grip. With a final resolution, I reached in and lifted out a sheet. As I read each paper, I was filled with shame. Before my eyes were the crimes I committed against the Marshal, against my friends, against myself. I reluctantly remembered those past habits that came back with vengeance and my lack of will to fight back. I agonized as I saw myself screaming words of anger and hatred against my mother, father, sister, and wife. I realized how hypocritical I was; I saw how impure my life was. I saw my lustful eyes looking at women other than my wife; I saw my swift feet rush to see injustice and do nothing about it. I saw my murmuring mouth as I spread lies and rumors to my friends. I felt anger that I directed to the innocent.

I couldn't stop myself from sobbing. There they were! Everything that I did in one day! One day and I did all this! How much more I've done for weeks, months, years?! I realized that nearly everything in that bucket had been things that I've done before I met the Marshal. I never truly turned away because I wanted to keep them. I wanted to still be the same person I was, but I wasn't! I was ashamed of myself and knew what I needed to do. I needed to make a decision to turn away from every one of my deeds and seek a better way.

So I picked up each paper, absorbed all of its contents, repented of my deed, and hurled my iniquity into the Refiner's Fire. With each throw, guilt and shame slowly lifted. I felt alive. I realized that I was no longer who I was if I could feel remorse and repent my life; I know that I can make it to the end.

It's been years since that day, but I still go to the Fire and read each of my offenses before I cast them into flames. There are still many that I do, but they are decreasing each day. The weight and number are slowly disappearing. I still weep when I see those deeds before me, but I know that one day I will come to the Fire not with a bucket, but with clean hands, clean lips and a clean heart.

My crimes may continue until the day I die, but I know that my crimes will be burned away and forgotten because my crimes may die, but the Fire will burn through all eternity...

The people around the Fire stare into their buckets and begin to reach for a paper. As the night carries on, one hears the cries of remorse as well as the shouts of joy.

— Michael Chu, I

And I Cannot . . .

When did it stop being easy? Suddenly and without a noticeable preamble there is an immense amount of pound-per-square-inch pressure residing upon my fingertips and I am honestly afraid that my knuckles will buckle under the weight.

I have been asked to create. To define. To invent. To amaze. To astound. To reveal—and
I cannot.

The sunlight has withdrawn its support and the chandelier above me sways in an awkward tango with the crossbeams as a rented big rig barrels down the street. Perhaps the source of my illumination is less to blame for my inaction than I would like to believe, but it is getting late, and I need a scapegoat. Looking around for any sort of conciliatory distraction, my eyes are drawn back to that glowing display time and time and time again. I sit in my dining room staring blankly at an electronic screen that pleads with every blink of the cursor to be encompassed by a brilliant idea and fulfilled with eloquent diction. Without any malice intended, I have come to lament my task.

Unfortunately, writing is not the only patient afflicted by this perverse and all-consuming illness. Completion (or creation) upon demand has a painfully high frequency. The hustle and bustle of modern American life seems to be the main cause and can be found in almost every facet of our culture. From nail polish that goes “from wet-to-set in two minutes flat!” to the express lunch guaranteed to be ready in five minutes or it’s free, it’s obvious we like *fast*. There is a need to have tasks finished long before they have even begun, with little mind paid to what happens in between. However, in all fairness, I have to admit that I speak with a twinge of hypocrisy. Even as I sit here watching my ink-jet printer turn out page after page of nonsensical facts and figures meant to assemble themselves as my parents’ federal income taxes, my face ripens in exasperation. I have things that need to be done, and this state of the art reproduction contraption is going soooooo slow. With my mind racing forward to how long it will take me to study for my German test and what I intend to wear to school in the morning, I mumble under my breath how much faster it should be, and move on. And we really don’t need to mention the time I verbally assaulted my father with every non-punishable obscenity I could think of for waking me up exactly one hundred and eighty seconds before he was supposed to. Time has become a hoarded commodity, and with insanely hectic lives one willingly fights with all previously untapped energies to save every possible instant.

There is nothing I would like more than to be able to pour forth upon this word processor the most brilliant piece of writing ever composed by human intellect short of holy books like the Bible and Torah, but writing isn’t that simple. Unfortunately, and ironically most fortunately, human creativity doesn’t work that way. Inspiration is supposed to be an original thread of beauty

that has such an abundance of spirit it works its way loose from a person's soul and finds its way through paintbrush or poem to the rest of the world. Under the most amiable of conditions creativity would be treated with the proper amount of respect and never be forced to perform against its will, but with a life full of deadlines and cut-offs it's very unlikely to find anyone who has enough time to pay homage to some sacred writing god. In reality creativity and inspiration are in such hot demand, it's basically impossible to allow them to surface naturally. Instead we plague our minds for original thought and take off running with any and all catchy ideas before we actually examine their worth.

Forcing something so innate, forcing anything meant to be spontaneous cheapens what it means to be original. Giving individuality commonplace features.

Without my knowledge, and certainly void of formal consent, thousands of irreplaceable moments have been taken away from me. In the end I will undoubtedly finish my paper. Good or bad, I know how to be a writer, and I know I can write. The history of America's farmers throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may not come alive on my eight-and-a-half-by-eleven chance to do something special, but it will be done. And perhaps that is the worst part of forcing a person to write creatively: it blurs the edges. Is it about wanting so badly to **say** something or wanting so badly to have **something** to say?

— Amy Bonner, II



What is Jazz?

There is something in every woman and man that is cool and smooth and hides behind all sorts of corners and behind the sparkling eyes of those who see it, feel it, touch it, are it. It is also rough and sharp, enough to jab or mend, unseen by some, heard by others, grown into a piece of almost nothing that can be as big as one wants it to be. That is *Jazz*.

So where does it come from? It seems that no one may know: "*Jazz...origin unknown*" says the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. But somehow, it has roots. It was a kind of music, native to America, first played extemporaneously by Negro bands in a place unknown, deep in the South, probably cradled by that warm, Southern attitude that lurks beneath the enormous canopies of elms and dim country road lights. *Jazz* was the name given to that sophisticated rhythm that poured from the bayou porches on some muggy night in July, considering nothing until someone discovered it as beautiful and decided to give it a name.

So that is how *Jazz* became *Jazz*, transformed into whatever anyone else wanted it to be. For the homeless man in the Common, *Jazz* was the story carried by the frigid November air that fogged from beneath the gray woolen blanket of charity. It was the word of excitement, the feeling of pain, as the black, dirty asphalt of the pathway scraped up against his leg and cried out the pangs of dignity for millions of people to watch. Inside his head, however, the Big Band dance music lulled the constant reminder that once *Jazz* arrives, it cannot depart, that it will occupy every aspect of your life, until the day the music stops, simultaneously with the beat of the heart.

That is *Jazz*, for one man. But it is in everyone else too. It is the music of the soul played note by note on the measure of the mind, trying to hide the shadows of oppression and the lurking of evil. From the depths of the soul and the odors of deceit, it rises out of a jukebox with

a harmony some people like and fewer can understand, filled with the lazy whine of the alto saxophone that calms all the frustrations of life. To those who can hear it, *Jazz* becomes the chorus of an African jungle weeping for its descendants, moaning for its lost children. The moaning starts at a murmur and gradually intensifies until the "Bee-boo-boo-boops" at B-flat can go no further to quell the heartache, at least for now.

Then, there are some who can feel it, taste it, see *Jazz* right in front of their eyes. For the strong at heart, *Jazz* becomes an attitude with a vibrant sense of pride and enthusiasm, the feeling of hope when all has gone wrong, that life goes on, and you can fix it with the hammering trumpets or make it void by listening to the never ending drone of clarinets or flutes or saxophones that peak and drop as if trying to tell you that the grand finale is near. *Jazz* becomes the food of the soul, the strong hold of desire, as gratifying as a chocolate souffle with strawberries dripping with caramel. For a while, it becomes so intense, so thrilling, so fast-paced that it consumes eyes, and the feeling becomes so personal that it almost seems to rob you of your innocence, letting you know who you really are inside and revealing your identity to people who see you outside. *Jazz* is a panther, dangerous, feared, because it is always misunderstood, because it is aggressive and enlivened, sensitive because it always knows what you need when you need it.

So what is *Jazz*? *Jazz* is what I see when the lights are out and there is no one there to see me cry. *Jazz* is a mirror in society, reflecting the blues of the world. *Jazz* is my ambitions, my goals, my dreams, and it lifts me when nothing seemed to keep me standing.

So, when someone walks past me and asks me why I, a fifteen-year-old youth, haven't fallen down, I will raise my head high and say, "Have you heard of *Jazz*? Let me sing you a song."

— Neal Boyle, II

Sporadic Nomad

The universe is a very big place. So big, that the whole notion of a universe is pretty near impossible. Nobody really has much of an idea how it started, and nobody really knows if it will ever end. Actually, its been around so long that endings and beginnings are really rather irrelevant. But, being the curious and industrious little folks that we are, we try to find things out about the things around us, even when knowing has little practical use, other than to make us feel intelligent and superior.

Most people don't even think of how big the Earth is. To think that we can really imagine the size of the universe is sort of embarrassing, so all we can really do, is say "yeah, its a pretty big place, heck of a lot of planets." Or, we can fashion short simple analogies: "well, if Boston were the size of my palm, the universe would be the size of the North America." But, since we don't really know how big North America is, it doesn't help much either. Likewise, big numbers have little use: sure, we know that nineteen trillion is huge, but what's nineteen trillion billion?

Anyway, on the other side of our really big universe, there are some other people. They, of course, aren't really people, but for the sake of the story, they'll be called people. I mean, maybe they have six heads, or no heads at all. Or maybe they have seventeen fingers, maybe they don't even know what seventeen is. But, in any case, regardless of all of this, they are there, they exist and also know, like we do, that the universe is a very big place. So big that they don't really have much of a notion about it at all.

They are much like us humans, these people are, but they don't really care much about the universe at all, about quasars and nebulae and spectral luminosity, because they are very intelligent people, and they realize that just knowing won't change much of any-

thing. So, instead of wasting time wondering, they do more practical things like making money and amassing lots of stuff, things and possessions. They are pretty simple little fellas, and they don't much mind not knowing about their universe. But these people, you see, they're actually very dull and depressing folks. They don't worry about useless emotions like hope; it just isn't practical to hope. Love? what's love anyway? It just gets in the way all the time, ruins everything. Being happy is all that's really important, that and having lots of stuff, money, cars, houses, children.

It isn't so much what these people are missing; the heart of the matter is what they have too much of. They're just too practical.

I'm sure glad that not everything in our world, on this side of the Milky Way, needs a reason for being. Curiosity, after all, is only natural.

— Benjamin Shenefelt, II



angel eyes

We let Old Nat King sharply throw us to the other world where his voice grumbles to the rough suave melody of a shiny sax. The sad tune mocks his soothing voice but we rock to the notes like a man and woman in a bluesy arena with smoke rising from the bar and drifting into the music. The men laugh deeply but we ourselves swing sharply and deliberately to fit in with the rocking of the King's sad deep song. I feel my heavy cold clip-on balls of diamond mass pressing my ears and pulling them down as I let my head rock and my body sway. My diamond studded dress clings to me and is stretched between my thin long legs, extended by the rigid spikes of my black strappy high-heeled shoes. The spikes push my heels and grind the ground but I rock. I let the push of the spikes convulse through me like a wave, beginning with a push from my knees to my waist to my breasts to my neck with a final throw back of my head. My neck gleams, regal and soft, a smooth streak of whiteness which extends from beneath my outstretched chin all the way under my sparkling dress down to my toes, wrapped in the sheer silk of black stockings. He holds my waist hard and supports the curve of my body. He is huge and strong and the one arm is enough to keep me real close and pressed against him. He keeps his head down, sometimes buried in the smoothness of my neck, other times moving this way then that way to the rich funk of the words and blues. A hat perches lightly on his downturned head shading his face from mine,

allowing words to come from his hidden mouth, with the cool rich mystery of a stranger just stopped in for a sad drink. She that was me was rocking and smiling wryly having just left her position with the dark rhythms of the band to acquiesce to the stranger's nodding glance. One foot before the other had been rocking her body back and forth and had moved her hips to a swanky sway and had brought her beneath the light spotted gleam of the dark dance floor. And she had waited and watched with drowsy eyes half closed for the stranger coming toward her. He too had swayed and swaggered with a smooth coolness to the straying notes of the sax. Then he had arrived and his head was behind her neck. The glimmering light spun and danced on their rocking heads, their knees pressed into one another, my thigh pushing his, my breasts now grazing his chest, now pulled away in a withdrawal, mocking like the saxophone tune. His hand wandered up her back and then pushed hard and made its way back down to the dip of her waist. She let the music open her mouth and lift her arms above her head. The whiteness of my body momentarily extended itself and then crawled back as my arms lightly rested on his big arms, and then his huge back wrapped up my delicate shoulders. My waist still swayed and he looked down. His eyes scanned my twisting body until they met my own half closed slits with a hot indifferent cool gaze. . . they locked mine and we continued to rock, our drooping lids shading the glare of the reflecting

light and squinting from the smoke of the bar and the hot intentions of our hands roughly pressing the bodies of the other, slowly but harshly crawling across the backs. He pulled the hand to his hat and pushed the crease, a tease with that wry smile accented by drowsy eyes. His coat hung down and helped and heaved the sway of his body. His thin white t-shirt clung tightly to his hard body and thin packed waist, as his suspenders reached up and hung tight to the bulk of his back and shoulders. The pinstriped wool of his pants was rough, and the buttons where the suspenders attached themselves dug into my soft body as he pulled me closer each time with the convulsion of music. His glossy black shoes poked out from beneath his finely cuffed pants, and the crease bent sharply and broke over his ankles, the cuffs resting calmly over the shine of his polished shoes. He let her feel the power of his thighs on hers. The force pushed a breath from her lips and a deep inhale of the thick air of the bar. A rich scent of his sharp clean cologne filled his nostrils as she let the deep breath again float and sag from her mouth, gently dropping open as she drunkenly fell to the sway of the sad betrayed words accompanying the jeering melody of the sax. The notes wound down, the sax was sad and ironic to his words. After the push of his hand he looked down to their shifting feet and rocking knees, and up again, slyly murmuring his words of betrayal and mystery and disappearance. . . He faded out of the jazzy bar as he had come in. . . With a mild gesture of his hand,

pushing her body away, with a slow turn his body swaggered out and the words melted on his lips. . . And the sax rang out in mocking anguish, moving with the twisted thick blanket of smoke drifting from the bar, saturating the arena.

The memory clashes with the strike of lightning, parting the land from the land as it hits the ground and breaks the earth with a deep bellowing crack. We are parted on two beds in a cold room. The air is empty and is illuminated by the dull light of an inquiry room. The bulb is unshaded and we feel cold.

— Kay Perdue, *I*





To a Friend

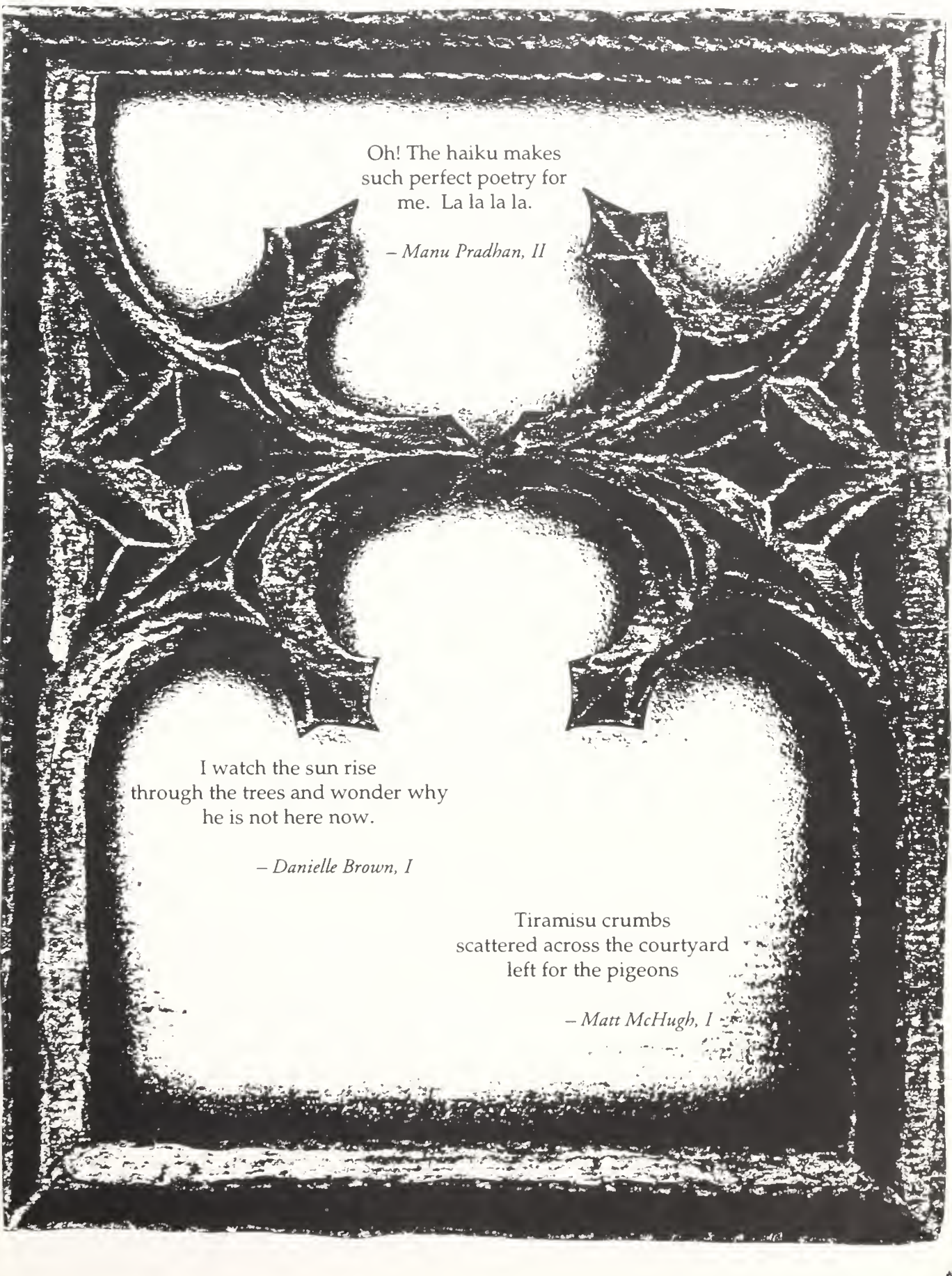
Intrusion into my personal realm: Evening
spirits away all my misgivings. Tell me your
stories, though they may awaken my sorrow. I
must hear them now while your smile makes the morrow a

far distant place, to be feared but ignored. For the
past has been written: your actions worked toward a
goal long abandoned, annulled by the way you con-
soled me, entreated my tears to allay. If I

lack any part, I will not understand: I will
see scattered relics with no distinct hand in your
present. Your face will be still incomplete; and though
radiant, lacking one singular feature. Too

long we've been strangers; so soon our time ends; but by
halting out silence we'll once more be friends.

— Anonymous



Oh! The haiku makes
such perfect poetry for
me. La la la la.

— *Manu Pradhan, II*

I watch the sun rise
through the trees and wonder why
he is not here now.

— *Danielle Brown, I*

Tiramisu crumbs
scattered across the courtyard
left for the pigeons

— *Matt McHugh, I*

Caribbean Rhythms

Caribbean Rhythms flow through my very soul.
In my homeland of Haiti my rhythm is alive, it is everywhere.
On a hot day my family and I went to La Plage de Guave, a beach nearby.
One could barely see the sand with all the people.
Every corner of La Plage de Guave was teeming with activity.

Over there a Tom-Tom Band was playing and women were
dancing in short skirts and string bikini tops.

Over there little shacks were alive
with the sizzle of frying banana fruit,
lambi, and shishkabobs. Dozens of
fruits from bananas and apples to
mangos and carouso were in
baskets and trays held by vendors.

Towards the entrance of the beach a clown with
coattails and platforms was amusing the younger
children with magic tricks and balloon animals.

On the west side of the beach stones in
the shape of tables and chairs were planted in
the sand, and even those looked natural. I saw my
aunt and little cousin, along with many other families,
sitting under the shade of the large, straw umbrellas placed
in the middle of each table.

Some ate. Some laughed.
Others stepped out of the water to drink half a bottle of Coca-Cola and jumped back in.
All the laughing, all the talking. It was overwhelming.
But at the same time it was all part of my rhythm.

It was now time to get into the water.
The scorching sun and humid air left me no other alternative.
I ran towards the water until I got to the very edge.

Stones of every size lay under the clear water.
Here the bottoms of beaches aren't laid out with sand, but with stones.
I picked one up. It was smooth and soft.
It seemed as if it had been sanded and polished by the ocean floor.
Its shiny wet surface in with the beaming sun made it almost impossible to look at.

I saw my cousins run to the water.
They hopped, skipped and jumped their way through the stones.
They were all wading in the warm water and I was the only one left.
"It can't be that difficult if they can do it," I thought.

I began to step into the water and tried to walk over the stones.
The stones hurt under my soft feet.
I struggled to move one foot in front of the other.
Each time, the impact hurt even more.

With each step I felt imbalance,
Like the sand I was accustomed to.
There was no surface to protect me,

It seemed as if each stone was placed,
Barring me from entering the water.

This was not part of my rhythm.

And as my cousins came to me and helped me over the stones,
I realized that it was their rhythm, not mine.

The water was clean and translucent.
Occasionally a fish would swim past me.
I'd jump in fright while my cousins laughed at my reaction.
"A true Yankee," they called me.

Farther away, men in boats dove into the water,
Causing all types of commotion.

This was not what I was accustomed to at all.

Everything I had experienced after I stepped into that water was a reminder of life's
simple pleasures
Pleasures which I have forgotten since the day
I left for the "Land of Opportunity."

That day at La Plage de Guave helped me realize
That my Caribbean rhythm still exists here.
It is just as vibrant as it is in my homeland,
But it's on a frequency only I can hear.

– *Emmanuella Duplessy, I*

The Burden of Finality

These brief interludes
in our lives are over,
my friends.
Now go home
and lay in your beds
with a weight,
The Burden of Finality
chained to your rib cage,
and remember that
these kinds of experiences
will come again,
but they too
will have an
end.

— *Kaitlyn Jolly, IV*

Rain

It pounds the earth unforgivingly,
Washing clean the blood-stained land,
Bringing life to sun-scorched valleys,
And soaking through the desert sands.
It pushes against the buildings tall,
And likewise trees which bend and sway.
It sneaks up on you in the black of night,
And it turns dark the blue of day.

Falling from the heavens high,
All the way to the depths of hell,
It rings out over all the earth
like the tolling of a steeple's bell.

The rain will come and it will go,
Bringing death and life the same,
Flooding through the smallest field,
Cleaning streets and the open plains.

— *Tiffany Luongo, II*



